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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 05/28/08

INDEX:

(1) Japan mulling sending SDF aircraft to China to extend assistance to areas hit by Sichuan earthquake (Nikkei)

(2) TICAD opens today; SDF refugee relief operations forgotten; No mention of SDF in Japan-Rwanda summit (Sankei)

(3) Agreement reached on revising civil service reform bill, reflecting prime minister's strong wishes; Ruling bloc totally accepts DPJ plan (Yomiuri)

(4) U.S. presidential candidate John McCain's contribution to Yomiuri Shimbun: America's Asia diplomacy likely to be an issue in upcoming presidential campaign; McCain says, "I attach more importance to Japan, South Korea, and Australia than to China" (Yomiuri)

(5) Interview with Ambassador to U.S. Kato before leaving office: Stronger desire to rely on Japan; Risk-free diplomacy at turning point (Asahi)

(6) Government to set up preparatory council on foreign, security policies under prime minister (Sankei)

(7) LDP, New Komeito wide apart over standing legislation for overseas dispatch of SDF (Yomiuri)

(8) Looking to Africa ahead of TICAD (Conclusion): With an eye on oil, Japan wishes to dispatch SDF for peace-keeping in Africa (Mainichi)

(9) (Corrected copy) McCain contributes article to *Yomiuri*, vowing to give top priority to U.S. allies, such as Japan (*Yomiuri*)

ARTICLES:

(1) Japan mulling sending SDF aircraft to China to extend assistance to areas hit by Sichuan earthquake

NIKKEI (Page 1) (Full)
Eve., May 28, 2008

A Japanese government official today revealed that the Chinese government has asked Japan for the provision of goods and transport means as part of efforts to provide assistance to areas hit by the Sichuan earthquake. Following this request, the government has begun discussing specific steps, including a dispatch of SDF aircraft to China.

If dispatching the SDF planes to China were realized, it would be the first case for SDF troops to set foot in China. In the disaster-affected areas, tents and other relief goods are in extremely short supply.

There is a good possibility that Japan will send ASDF C-130 transport planes to China for emergency transportation.

(2) TICAD opens today; SDF refugee relief operations forgotten; No mention of SDF in Japan-Rwanda summit

SANKEI (Page 3) (Full)

TOKYO 00001463 002 OF 011

May 28, 2008

The 4th round of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD IV) will kick off today at a hotel in Yokohama. Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda, chair of the international conference, will announce Japan's aid measures, such as doubling its official development assistance (ODA) for Africa. Fukuda wants to get support from African countries for Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, as well as for a sector-specific approach on reducing greenhouse gas emissions (for a post-Kyoto Protocol framework). The achievements of TICAD will be reflected in the Group of Eight summit in July (in Hokkaido) which will take up policy toward Africa and international food issues as major agenda items.

Neither Prime Minister Fukuda nor Rwandan President Paul Kagame referred to a relief unit for Rwandan refugees that Japan dispatched in 1994 to the former Zaire (currently Republic of Congo) as humanitarian contribution. This means that the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) historic operations in Africa have been forgotten.

Based on the International Peace Cooperation Law, the Japanese government deployed SDF troops in Goma, Zaire, from September through December in 1994, to conduct humanitarian relief operations for Rwandan refugees. This was the first time for Japan to conduct humanitarian operations on its own, not as peacekeeping operations (PKO).

However, in his meeting with Kagame, Fukuda said: "I highly praise your leadership in making your country a success after overcoming the tragedy of the genocide." He, however, did not mention anything about the SDF personnel who labored hard during the refugee relief mission.

The Rwandan president did not tender his appreciation for the SDF and Japan's assistance.

China, which has actively carried out diplomacy in Africa, currently has 13,000 troops participating in six PKO missions. Japan's SDF members are not taking part in any PKO mission in Africa. All the more because Japan's influence has been waning, it is regrettable that there was no mention on the SDF's operations in the Fukuda-Kagame meeting.

(3) Agreement reached on revising civil service reform bill, reflecting prime minister's strong wishes; Ruling bloc totally accepts DPJ plan

YOMIURI (Page 3) (Excerpts)
May 28, 2008

The ruling coalition and the Democratic Party of Japan agreed yesterday to revise a draft bill on reforming the civil service system, paving the way for it to be passed into law before the end of the current Diet session. The agreement reflects Prime Minister Fukuda's strong desire to embark on reform and the ruling and opposition camps' concern about being labeled as dismissive of reform.

Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura in a press conference last evening indicated that there was the prime minister's strong leadership behind the agreement between the two camps on revising

TOKYO 00001463 003 OF 011

the bill.

The prime minister's strong wishes also seem to have prompted the ruling parties to reach the agreement with the DPJ by abandoning cautiousness.

On the afternoon of May 15, the prime minister held a meeting with LDP Diet affairs chief Tadamori Oshima and his New Komeito counterpart Yoshio Urushibara at the prime minister's official residence. In the session, Fukuda expressed his determination to pass the bill into law during the current Diet session. The ruling camp accelerated its working-level talks following this meeting.

There was a boost from within the LDP, with former Secretary General Hidenao Nakagawa saying, "If we fail to enact the bill in the ongoing Diet session, the ruling camp would be criticized as squelching it." The prime minister also said to his aide earlier this month: "It is important to begin reforming the civil servant system even by revising the bill." Frustrated with policy issues that have not moved forward in the divided Diet, the prime minister apparently intended to achieve results by enacting the civil service reform bill. According to a person concerned, the prime minister made efforts to break the gridlock by, for instance, asking on the phone an executive of Rengo (Japanese Trade Union Confederation), which supports the DPJ, to encourage the largest opposition party to agree on the bill.

A revised plan that was put together in accordance with the prime minister's wishes effectively embraced the DPJ plan except for a ban on the amakudari, the practice of retiring senior bureaucrats taking lucrative jobs in private-sector firms or quasi-government entities they previously oversaw.

Moreover, the revised plan did not include a clause restricting contact between lawmakers and bureaucrats, which had drawn fire from the ruling camp, making it easier for the ruling parties to give a nod to it.

Nevertheless, the two camps simply agreed on a "reform menu" for the next five years. Implementation of the legislation requires amendments to such laws as the National Civil Service Law and the Cabinet Law. There is a possibility that the ruling camp will lock horns with the opposition bloc over specifics.

DPJ opted to soften stance rather than squashing the bill

The DPJ agreed to revise the draft bill from the intention to avoid being blamed by the government and ruling parties for crushing the envisaged civil service reform, according to a DPJ executive.

Secretary General Yukio Hatoyama initially criticized the government plan for a lack of descriptions on amakudari. But members responsible for the matter, including Diet affairs deputy chief Jun Azumi, had a strong desire to aim at an improved bill, thinking that a failure to enact the legislation would please the Kasumigaseki

bureaucrats alone.

In addition, with the next Lower House election slipping away, there seems to have been a decision that it would be more effective to play up the need to eliminate the amakudari practice right before the next Lower House election rather than chanting the principles.

TOKYO 00001463 004 OF 011

Aware of the fact that many LDP lawmakers were negative about the draft bill, the DPJ also figured that it would be able to apply pressure on the LDP by showing a stance supportive of the government plan.

DPJ President Ichiro Ozawa indicated that he would leave the matter to the persons in charge. Ozawa, holding a meeting with party executives on the evening of May 26, confirmed a policy direction to reach an accord with the ruling bloc if it agreed to revise the bill. According to Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Kenji Yamaoka, an agreement was reached following the ruling bloc's acceptance of the DPJ plan in the working-level talks, although LDP heavyweights and government officials tried from the night of May 26 through the morning of May 27 to make it toothless on behalf of the bureaucrats.

(4) U.S. presidential candidate John McCain's contribution to Yomiuri Shimbun: America's Asia diplomacy likely to be an issue in upcoming presidential campaign; McCain says, "I attach more importance to Japan, South Korea, and Australia than to China"

YOMIURI (Page 6) (Full)
May 28, 2008

Aya Igarashi, Washington

Senator John McCain (71), who is certain to be nominated as the Republican presidential candidate, revealed his Asia policy in his contributed essay prepared by himself and (Senator Joe Lieberman) to the Yomiuri Shimbun. A major feature of his Asia policy is to place a higher priority on relations with such American allies as Japan, South Korea, and Australia than with China. In planned debates with the Democratic presidential candidate ahead of the election in November, it is likely that Asia policy will become a campaign issue, such as how close should relations with China be.

The essay is in principle based on the Bush administration's "value-based diplomacy," an idea of strengthening relations with countries who share the same democratic values. It can be taken as an East Asia-version of McCain's article contributed last October to a foreign affairs journal in which he suggested creating a league of democracies.

In the background are a number of supporters of the Bush administration's Asia policy who also back the McCain camp. Among them are former Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage and former Senior Director for Asian Affairs at the NSC Michael Green.

The objective of the essay seems to be to provide a sense of security to America's allies, which are paying close attention to the first change in the administration in the U.S. in eight years. The essay in covering the North Korean nuclear issue shows consideration to Japan by emphasizing the need to respond with a "dialogue and pressure" line. The essay stresses the importance of the Japanese abduction issue by noting, "We must not forget it."

McCain and Senator Barack Obama (46), who is likely to be nominated as the Democratic presidential candidate, are both calling on China to observe international rules, but in the case of Obama, as part of his Asia policy, he has revealed that he aims to build a new comprehensive security system for East Asia, in addition to America's previous alliance framework. This is significantly

TOKYO 00001463 005 OF 011

different from McCain's Asia policy. In the economic issues, too,

McCain sharply criticized Obama for his opposition to concluding a free trade agreement with South Korea, saying, "This kind of protectionism is highly irresponsible."

(5) Interview with Ambassador to U.S. Kato before leaving office: Stronger desire to rely on Japan; Risk-free diplomacy at turning point

ASAHI (Page 4) (Full)
May 28, 2008

Ambassador to the U.S. Ryozo Kato on May 27 returned home, serving out an unusually long term of six years and seven months. He arrived at his post right after the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the U.S. Since then, he has tackled various issues that have shaken Japan-U.S. relations, including the Iraq war, the BSE issue involving U.S. beef exports to Japan, and the U.S. House of Representative's adoption of a comfort women resolution. The Asahi Shimbun asked him about the state of Japan-U.S. relations.

(Interviewer: Yoichi Kato, bureau chief of the American General Bureau)

-- The U.S. forces in Japan realignment is going slowly. The U.S. is disgruntled about it.

"The delay in settling the issue does not mean Japan has failed to keep a promise. However, in my view, it is necessary for the Japanese government to go ahead with the realignment according to the procedures agreed upon."

-- There is no end to crimes committed by U.S. servicemen.

"When the cost of keeping the alliance exceeds the benefits the alliance brings about, mistrust in the alliance heightens. I think it is necessary for both Japan and the U.S. to forge a perception regarding management of the alliance. This process will start when the U.S. shares the pain felt by Japanese, and Japanese understand the burden the U.S. is shouldering."

-- Does the U.S. take the view that the value of traditional alliances have declined since the 9/11 terrorist attack?

"It is difficult to talk about it in general terms. There is the reality that the U.S. now finds itself in a tight spot as a result of taking a unilateral action in a positive way. It may have a stronger desire to rely on allies."

-- Do you feel that U.S. expectations for Japan have increased?

"Yes, I do. Although the number of Japan experts in the U.S. government has decreased, the interest in Japan has increased as a whole. The option of ruling out Japan in discussing issues involving Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran and Africa has disappeared."

-- What impact will the presidential election have on bilateral relations?

"Basically, I do not think it will have much impact on Japan-U.S. relations. However, there are some elements that may prove that such thinking was a mistake. The first element is how Japan will move."

TOKYO 00001463 006 OF 011

What presence does Japan want the U.S. to see, or how is Japan going to use its presence -- I think this is a major element. The next one is that if the president is replaced and people around him are replaced, some changes are bound to occur. That is why managing the alliance becomes important.

-- Regarding the wartime comfort women issue, what is your view on the adoption by the House of Representatives of a resolution seeking an apology from Japan?

"This issue has long been in place and it will continue to be in place in the future as well. I think the issue will crop up again for a while each time the ratio of Republicans and Democrats in

Congress change. What Japan should do is to continue to steadily explain its stand. It is important that the U.S. feels Japan's sincerity.

"When I arrived at the post, the major issue was the lawsuit filed by a former U.S. Navy seaman who was captured by the former Japanese Army during World War II. He demanded more compensation in violation of the Treaty of San Francisco. The lawsuit was so serious. It pinned responsibility on Japanese companies as well. The matter is about to become a dead issue, but it still exists." I think

-- What is your view of the BSE issue involving U.S. beef, another unsettled issue?

We must face the U.S. over what are scientific grounds. There may be international standards. Each country may have its own criteria regarding the degree of risk involved in eating beef. However, I have had guests from Japan, including the prime minister, eat U.S. beef during my tenure as ambassador to the U.S."

-- Do you think there is a lack of unity between Japan and the U.S.?

"Japan and the U.S. are in a line in terms of both aiming at preventing North Korea from possessing nuclear arms. However, some are concerned about the unity between the two countries, presumably because they are concerned about problems likely to occur in the process of realizing that goal. The cards we have in making North Korea a nuclear-free country are limited. It is necessary to undertake coordination regarding how to use those cards in a meticulous manner. We must be cautious so that we do not use up those cards before producing results."

-- Mr. Ambassador, you have called on Japan to take more risks as it expands its role in the international community. What are concrete measures for that?

"Japan's diplomacy to date has been exceptionally successful in the sense that it has produced maximum benefits at the minimum price. However, I think there are issues in which Japan must find breakthroughs. I am not saying that Japan should take part in military operations at the cost of casualties. However, in order to win a higher praise from the international community, it should do things that it has never done before. This may include taking part in peace-keeping operations (PKO). However, we have now entered the age in which environmental and economic cooperation is absolutely inseparable from security. Risk-free diplomacy is one option. However, Japanese people would not be satisfied with such an option.

TOKYO 00001463 007 OF 011

(6) Government to set up preparatory council on foreign, security policies under prime minister

SANKEI (Top Play) (Full)
May 27, 2008

As part of efforts to strengthen the Prime Minister's office's functions regarding foreign and security policies, the government decided yesterday to boldly revise the current policymaking system. It will set up in the Cabinet Secretariat a "preparatory committee on comprehensive foreign and security policies" (tentative name) to map out foreign and security policies under the prime minister's direct control. This can be defined as a second step to be taken by Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda on the security front, following the New Fukuda Doctrine regarding foreign policy. The government was slow to take action to deal with low-priority key issue, but it has finally started moving. This decision will be incorporated in a report to be produced in June by the Council on Reforming the Defense Ministry. The government aims to pass a bill revising the law for the establishment of the Security Council of Japan next year or after.

The former Abe cabinet aimed to reorganize the Security Council of Japan, but Fukuda's reform plan will retain the council. The new

plan also proposes setting up an expert committee on improvement in the defense capabilities of the Ground, Maritime and Air Self-Defense Forces. The panel will be set up under the Security Council of Japan and will be chaired by the chief cabinet secretary, so that medium- and long-term policies will be worked out under the initiative of the Prime Minister's Office (Kantei). The aim is to enable the Kantei to take the initiative in increasing military capability, replacing the Defense Ministry, which has continued to compile separate budgets for the Ground, Maritime and Air Staff Offices.

Under the Cabinet Law, the prime minister is allowed to have up to five special advisors. One of the five will take charge of foreign and security policies. The responsible special advisor will chair the new preparatory committee on comprehensive foreign and security policies and will be engaged in preparing for comprehensive foreign and security policies. The committee will be composed of the two assistant deputy chief cabinet secretaries (for foreign, and security/crisis management policies), the cabinet intelligence director, the Foreign Ministry Foreign Policy Bureau director general, the Defense Ministry Defense Policy Bureau director general, and others.

The plan was drafted in consultations involving Prime Minister Fukuda, National Defense Academy President Makoto Iokibe, and Defense Minister Shigeru Ishiba at a Tokyo hotel on May 4.

Former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe submitted a bill amending the law for the establishment of the Security Council of Japan with the aim of creating a Japanese version of the National Security Council (NSC), but Fukuda scrapped it. Now that attention is being paid to reforming the Defense Ministry, set off by the collision between a Maritime Self-Defense Force's Aegis ship and a fishing boat in February and a series of scandals involving the ministry, Fukuda seems to have judged it necessary to demonstrate his own policy identity on the security front, as well, although he seemingly has put security policy on the backburner.

TOKYO 00001463 008 OF 011

The Abe concept called for setting up a secretariat in the Security Council of Japan after it is reorganized in imitation of the NSC of the U.S. But Fukuda intends to increase staff members in the two offices headed by the assistant deputy chief cabinet secretaries for security and crisis management policies by stationing uniformed SDF officials under the assistant deputy chief cabinet secretaries.

The special advisor in charge of foreign and security policies, with the two assistant deputy chief cabinet secretaries under him, will assume charge of administrative work for the Security Council of Japan and three ministers meetings held as needed by the chief cabinet secretary, the foreign minister, and the defense minister to confer on diplomatic and security issues.

In the Abe cabinet, former Defense Minister Yuriko Koike assumed the post of special advisor in charge of national security issues in September 2006, but it was not a permanent post at that time. Since Koike assumed the post after then Defense Minister Fumio Kyuma stepped down in July last year, the post has remained unfilled.

(7) LDP, New Komeito wide apart over standing legislation for overseas dispatch of SDF

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
May 24, 2008

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its junior coalition partner New Komeito on May 23 held the first session of their project team to discuss permanent legislation to stipulate how Japan will dispatch the Self-Defense Forces (SDF) abroad. The LDP intends to establish that kind of permanent law during the upcoming extraordinary Diet session in the fall and incorporate in the law what is written in the New Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, which is to expire in next January, so that the Air Self-Defense Force (ASDF) can continue the refueling mission it is engaged in at present in the Indian Ocean. But with the New Komeito cautious about

enacting permanent legislation, there is every likelihood that what will be done in the upcoming extraordinary Diet session will be limited to revising the New Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law to extend its term.

In its first session, the project team decided that the following three points would be the basic course for consideration: (1) no changes would be made to the government's current interpretation of the Constitution, which prohibits Japan from exercising the right to collective self-defense; (2) civilian control would be secured through Diet approval, and (3) the government would submit a bill. These basic principles reflect the team's consideration to the New Komeito, which remains cautious about broadening the overseas activities of the SDF.

After the session, Chairman Taku Yamasaki, a former LDP vice president, told reporters, "I want to pave the way for the government to submit a bill to the upcoming extraordinary Diet session." But New Komeito Policy Research Council Deputy Chairman Natsuo Yamaguchi noted, "Preparing legislation and submitting a bill to the Diet is not our first priority," revealing a difference in views between the two parties.

The team will meet twice a week until mid-June and produce an outline of the bill. High on agenda for discussion in the meetings

TOKYO 00001463 009 OF 011

will be such topics as whether to approve (the SDF's) participation in activities not backed by a United Nations resolution, whether to include guarding, maintenance of security, and ship inspections under the scope of SDF activities, whether to ease the authority to allow the use of weapons, and how to obtain Diet approval.

The LDP deems it difficult for Japan to swiftly and smoothly take part in international peacekeeping operations if it has to repeatedly extend the term of the special measures law as it did before. In contrast, heeding public criticism of a series of scandals involving the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and the recent collision between an Aegis vessel and a fishing boat, many in the New Komeito and its support base, the Soka Gakkai, share the view that given the present situation, it is difficult to obtain the public's understanding about enacting a standing law (for overseas dispatch of the SDF)."

There is every possibility that approval from both houses of the Diet will be required for overseas dispatches of the SDF under the standing legislation. In this context, it would be the responsibility of the ruling bloc to obtain the cooperation of the major opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ), which dominates the Upper House, but no prospects are in sight now for such cooperation from the DPJ. At a news conference on May 23, DPJ Secretary General Hatoyama touched on this kind of permanent legislation and noted: "Debate on permanent legislation is necessary, but I don't think a standing law will be enacted before the Fukuda cabinet wins the public's confidence."

Regarding the MSDF's refueling activities now going on in the Indian Ocean under the New Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law, many in MOFA and the MOD are calling for continuing the mission, with one official noting, "The refuelings symbolize Japan's efforts to be actively engaged in the fight against terrorism and to contribute to the Japan-U.S. alliance." The government is likely to introduce a bill revising the special measures law to the upcoming extraordinary Diet session in the fall in order to extend the term of the law, even if permanent legislation fails to take shape. In July next year, the Iraq Special Measures Law, which specifies the SDF's operations in Iraq, is to expire. In this regard, the view being floated in the government is that if the new U.S. administration is not firmly engaged in Iraq, calls for a withdrawal of the SDF from Iraq will likely surface in Japan, and that given the importance of Japan's international contributions, it may be wise to continue (the MSDF's) refueling activities in the Indian Ocean.

SDF's overseas activities conducted under special measures laws

Legal basis Details of activities Expiration

New Anti-Terrorism Special Measures Law The MSDF's supply ships provide fuel and water free of charge to other countries' vessels monitoring movements of terrorists in the Indian Ocean. Jan. 15, 2009

Iraq Special Measures Law The Air Self-Defense Force's aircraft transports personnel and goods from the UN and the multinational force between Kuwait and Iraq. July 31, 2009

(8) Looking to Africa ahead of TICAD (Conclusion): With an eye on oil, Japan wishes to dispatch SDF for peace-keeping in Africa

MAINICHI (Page 5) (Full)
May 24, 2008

TOKYO 00001463 010 OF 011

Ken Uzuka

On May 10, in a relatively quiet suburb of Sudan's capital of Khartoum, government forces and an anti-government insurgency clashed, drawing casualties. The incident was only five days after Senior Vice Foreign Minister Itsunori Onodera had departed for home after meeting with key Sudanese officials in the capital. Around the same time, Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs Yasuhide Nakayama was visiting the headquarters of the United Nations peacekeeping operations (PKO) in the southern part of the country.

The visits to Sudan by two high-level Japanese officials came about at the special request of Chief Cabinet Secretary Nobutaka Machimura to the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's (LDP) Diet Affairs Committee Chairman Tadamori Oshima. Machimura told Oshima: "I would like you to allow the two to travel to that country on the condition that they will return home by the time we take a revote (on the bill amending the Special Measures Law on Revenue Sources for Road Projects)." With a revote on the bill just around the corner, the lawmakers of the ruling bloc had been banned from traveling. This sort of confinement forced even Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda to give up on a plan to travel to European countries

Machimura, who formerly served as foreign minister, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), were both motivated by a desire to give momentum to calls in Japan for a dispatch of (Self-Defense Forces (SDF) personnel) to Sudan by highlighting that the country was safe. Their motivation stems from the international competition now going on for oil resources in that country.

More than half the oil produced in Sudan is exported to China, with Japan coming in second. Last October, China sent an engineering unit to Sudan's Darfur, where the dispute continues. Machimura and MOFA are in a rush not to be left behind, but the Ministry of Defense (MOD) is cautious about sending SDF personnel to Sudan, some officials stressing the high risk remaining of becoming entangled in the conflict.

Ironically, the dispatch of the two high-level officials resulted in only highlighting the danger in that region. On May 13, MOFA raised the level of danger in the region so that the public should reconsider traveling to the suburban areas of the capital of Sudan.

Notwithstanding, MOFA can't easily give up on all plans to send someone to the region. At the end of March, MOFA sent Ambassador of Friendship to the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) Mayu Tsuruta, an actress, to Sudan. MOFA is desperate to impress safety in the south of Sudan on the Japanese public.

At the TICAD conference, building peace will be among major subjects for discussion. Peace building is an idea stemming from the thinking that peace is an essential factor for economic growth in Africa. But a contest for securing resources has already begun from the stage of peace building.

(9) (Corrected copy) McCain contributes article to Yomiuri, vowing to give top priority to U.S. allies, such as Japan

May 28, 2008

Republican presidential candidate, Senator John McCain, 71, contributed an article to the Yomiuri Shimbun on May 26. The article, coauthored by Senator Joseph Lieberman, 66, spells out his Asia strategy, including policy toward Japan. Making clear the policy to give top priority to U.S. allies, such as Japan, McCain makes a clear distinction with the Democratic Party, which attaches importance to China.

The paper defines the U.S.-Japan alliance as the indispensable pillar for the peace and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region. Urging Japan to play an international role fitting its political, economic and defense power, the paper also calls on the country to shoulder a greater burden. At the same time, McCain announced his support for Japan's bid for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

This is the first time for McCain to unveil his Asia policy since his Republican presidential nomination became certain in March. Lieberman was a Democratic vice presidential candidate in the 2000 presidential race. Rumor has it that if McCain wins the presidency, he will make Lieberman his secretary of State.

SCHIEFFER